

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

[Home](#) > [Research Program](#) > [Responses to Information Requests](#)

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

7 January 2013

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Pakistan: Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs), including overseas identity cards; issuance procedures
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC), Overview

According to the website of Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), all citizens of Pakistan who are 18 years of age and older are eligible to be issued the Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) (Pakistan n.d.f). The website indicates that NADRA launched the multi-biometric national identity card project in 2000 (ibid. n.d.j). The *Economic Times*, a Mumbai-based English-language newspaper, indicates that Pakistan started issuing biometric ID cards in 2001 (22 July 2012). According to a UN Women news release, 96 percent of the adult population has been issued national ID cards (UN 4 Oct. 2012). Reuters reports, however, that, according to the chairman of the NADRA, 91 percent of the population has ID cards (22 Nov. 2012). The UN Women news release reports that, in order to achieve a goal of 100 percent registration, NADRA added "more static offices, Mobile Registration Vans and Semi Mobile Registration Units" (4 Oct. 2012). In September 2012, NADRA used its mobile registration units in rain-hit areas of Sindh, South Punjab and Balochistan, so flood victims could obtain CNICs (Pakistan 18 Sept. 2012; Radio Pakistan 18 Sept. 2012; *The News International* 18 Sept. 2012).

Sources report that a CNIC is required for processes such as obtaining passports (UN 4 Oct. 2012; BBC 7 June 2012) or driver's licenses (UN 4 Oct. 2012), engaging in employment (ibid.; BBC 7 June 2012), registering as a voter (UN 4 Oct. 2012; BBC 7 June 2012), as well as for accessing social services (UN 4 Oct. 2012), opening a bank account (ibid.; *The Economic Times* 22 July 2012; BBC 7 June 2012), and gaining admission to a college or university (ibid.).

1.1 Application Process

According to NADRA's website, in order to obtain a CNIC, first time applicants are required to submit the CNIC or a MNIC [manual ID card (Pakistan n.d.c)] number of any blood relative, and either a birth certificate, school certificate, or citizenship certificate (ibid. n.d.a). An applicant who was previously registered and had a manual ID card, is required to submit only an original or a copy of their MNIC (ibid.). An applicant who has turned 18 years of age and has his or her Child Registration Certificate (CRC) is required to submit his or her original CRC or a copy (ibid.). NADRA's websites explains that an applicant must present himself or herself at one of the NSRC [NADRA Swift Registration Centre (ibid. n.d.k)] offices where the process consists of the following steps: upon arrival at the data acquisition counter, the applicant will be issued a token; next, his or her photograph and an impression of the thumb will be taken, as well as a signature; the data entry operator will enter the required data and print the form; data will be verified at the NADRA's data warehouse; the card is then printed (ibid. n.d.f). NSRC offices are located in each district (Academic 30 Dec. 2012).

There is no fee for processing a new CNIC and the processing time is 30 days (ibid.). The fee for urgent processing is 300 Pakistani rupees (PKR) [about C\$3.00 (XE 18 Dec. 2012)] and the processing time is 15 days (Pakistan n.d.f).

In 12 December 2012 correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Evangelical Asian Church Toronto, which serves Pakistani and Indian Christians (Evangelical Asian Church Toronto n.d.) by promoting religious freedom, human rights and assisting immigrants, refugees, youth and "persecuted" communities, indicated that an applicant's religion is not noted on the CNIC, but it is recorded by NADRA (ibid. 12 Dec. 2012). An academic at McGill University, who is a specialist in Islamic law and Pakistani history (5 Dec. 2012), and *The Express Tribune* corroborate the above information (Academic 30 Dec. 2012; *The Express Tribune* 12 Apr. 2012). According to the church representative, CNICs contain the following information:

Legal Name, Gender (male, female, or transgender), Father's name (Husband's name for married females), Identification Mark, Date of Birth, National Identity Card Number, Family Tree ID Number, Current Address, Permanent Address, Date of Issue, Date of Expiry, Signature, Photo, and Fingerprint (Thumbprint). (Evangelical Asian Church Toronto 12 Dec. 2012)

The BBC reports that the CNIC includes a person's photograph, as well as their name, parentage, permanent and temporary addresses, registration number and a family number (BBC 7 June 2012). According to the BBC, individuals are given their own family

number when they get married (ibid.). In 30 December 2012 correspondence with the Research Directorate, the academic indicated that the validity of CNICs varies from five to ten years (30 Dec. 2012). Corroborating information on the validity of CNICs could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

2. National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP)

Sources indicated that the National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP) is issued to Pakistanis who hold dual nationality (*Daily The Pak Banker* 5 Dec. 2012; Pakistan n.d.b; ibid. 8 Feb. 2012) or who have emigrated or work abroad (ibid.). Children of Pakistani nationals are also eligible to apply for a NICOP (ibid.). The website of the Consulate General of Pakistan in Vancouver explains that the following people can apply for a NICOP:

- Citizens holding nationalities [of specified countries with which Pakistan has dual-citizenship agreements] along with Pakistani Nationality ... ;
- Pakistani citizens staying abroad, having passport or old NIC;
- Citizens of dual national countries holding Pakistani NIC/Passport even if they are using foreign passport for traveling;
- Siblings and dependents of the above. (ibid. n.d.h)

Pakistan has dual-citizenship agreements with Australia, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, the Netherlands, the UK, and the US (ibid.). Holders of NICOPs are entitled to visa-free entry to Pakistan (ibid. n.d.b; ibid. 15 Apr. 2009b). According to NADRA, NICOP holders are fully recognized as Pakistani citizens and they enjoy the same protection rights as other Pakistanis (ibid.). Information on the appearance and the content of the NICOP could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

2.1 Issuance in Pakistan

One of the following documents must be submitted to the NSRC when applying for a NICOP in Pakistan:

- a birth certificate
- old National Identity Card (NIC)
- matriculation certificate
- CNICs of immediate relatives
- passport, which is mandatory in the case of a first-time application (ibid. n.d.g).

The regular processing time for a NICOP is 30 days, and urgent processing is 15 days (ibid.).

2.2 Issuance in Canada

The website of the Pakistan Diplomatic Mission in Canada indicates that NICOP applications can be submitted to the Pakistani missions in Canada (ibid. [2012]). An application form can be downloaded from the website of the Diplomatic Mission of Pakistan in Canada (ibid.). In order to obtain a new NICOP, an individual must submit the following documents:

- an application form;
- 2 photographs;
- copies of CRC / MNIC / CNIC / NICOP of the applicant, his or her parents and his or her spouse, if applicable;
- a copy of the applicant's [Canadian] Permanent Resident Card and valid Pakistani passport, or, if an applicant is a Canadian citizen, a copy of his or her valid Canadian passport; and
- the application fee (ibid. 8 Feb. 2012).

According to the website of the Pakistan Diplomatic Mission in Canada, it takes 16 to 20 weeks to obtain a NICOP because applications are forwarded to NADRA's main office in Islamabad for processing (ibid.). The website indicates that NADRA issues NICOPs and sends them directly to the applicants (ibid.). One can check the status of an application online or by calling the NADRA office at a number provided on the website of the Pakistan Diplomatic Mission in Canada (ibid.). The fee for processing is C\$57.00 (ibid. [2012]).

3. Pakistani Origin Card (POC)

Pakistani government sources indicate that three categories of persons are eligible to apply for the Pakistan Origin Card (POC):

- former Pakistani citizens;
- foreigners with links to Pakistan; and
- persons who were born in the Indian sub-continent or were domiciled in what is now Pakistan, or who have a parent or grandparent that meets this requirement, and the qualifying member of the family became a citizen of another country before the coming into force of the *Pakistan Citizenship Act, 1951* (Pakistan 15 Apr. 2009a; ibid. n.d.e).

NADRA's website explains that, in the latter two groups, applicants must prove that at least one living relative is a citizen of Pakistan (ibid. 15 Apr. 2009a). Media sources report that, according to the Interior minister, spouses and children of Pakistani nationals residing abroad are also eligible to apply for POCs (APP 4 Dec. 2012; *Daily The Pak Banker* 5 Dec. 2012).

A POC allows its holder visa-free entry into and unlimited stay in Pakistan, exemption from foreigner registration requirements, permission to purchase and sell property, and the right to open and operate bank accounts (Pakistan n.d.d; ibid. n.d.e; ibid. n.d.b). POCs are valid for seven years (ibid. n.d.d; ibid. n.d.e).

Pakistani citizens with dual nationality or Pakistani citizens on work or residence permits abroad are not eligible for a POC, but are eligible for a NICOP (ibid. 15 Apr. 2009a; ibid. n.d.e). NADRA's website indicates that individuals of Pakistani origin having nationality of the

following countries are not eligible to apply for a POC: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Nigeria, "PLO," Serbia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Uganda and Yemen (ibid. 26 Apr. 2010).

According to the website of the Diplomatic Mission of Pakistan in Canada, the following documents must be submitted to Pakistani missions in Canada [(ibid. [2012])] when applying for a POC:

- bank receipt or draft;
- two recent photographs
- photocopy of one's NIC/CNIC
- photocopy of NIC / CNIC / POC for parents or husband;
- photocopy of Pakistani passports for self or parents (if available);
- photocopy of one's foreign passport (non-expired);
- birth certificate;
- marriage certificate (for first time registration as married person);
- photocopy of NIC/CNIC of a blood relative living in Pakistan (if applying on basis of having blood relative in Pakistan);
- original Computerized National Identity Card, if held (ibid. n.d.i).

An application form can be downloaded from the website of the Diplomatic Mission of Pakistan in Canada (ibid. [2012]) or from NADRA's website (ibid. n.d.d). The fee for POC processing is US\$100 for individuals who are 18 years of age and older, and US\$50 for those who are under 18 (ibid. n.d.i). A POC can be mailed to one's home, or collected from a local NADRA card distribution point or from a Pakistani mission (ibid.). Information on the appearance of the POC could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral Sources: Attempts to contact the following were unsuccessful: academics at the Lahore University and University of Birmingham; human rights journalist; lawyers in Pakistan; Pakistan – consulates of Pakistan in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Montreal, New York, Vancouver, embassies of Pakistan in France, Germany, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Washington, DC, Honorary Consulate General of Pakistan in Boston, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Ministry of Interior, National Database and Registration Authority.

Officials of the High Commission of Canada in Pakistan and Consulate General of Pakistan in Toronto were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; BBC; Council on Foreign Relations; *Daily Times*; *The Economic Times*; Emory University Law School; *The Hindu*; Factiva; Freedom House; *Frontier Post*; Institute for Human Rights, Finland; Muslim Women's League; *The Nation*; *Nyasa Times*; Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre; Pakistan – consulates general of Pakistan in Montreal and New York, Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, DC, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, National Assembly of Pakistan, National Reconstruction Bureau, Police; *Pakistan Observer*; Plus News Pakistan; South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; UN – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Refworld; US Department of State.

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Top of Page
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